

9 G.O.P. Senators Attack Bush on Lithuania

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WASHINGTON, April 27 — President Bush's policy of seeking not to damage relations with the Soviet Union during the Lithuanian crisis came under sharp attack today by nine Republican senators, marking the first serious break in Congressional support for the Administration's handling of the Baltic situation.

The senators called on the Administration to renounce the trade agreement that American and Soviet negotiators reached in principle on Thursday, saying it was ill-timed because of the Soviet crackdown on Lithuania.

Until today, Mr. Bush's decision not to impose sanctions against Moscow for its economic embargo of Lithuania had been greeted mostly with bipartisan approval. But the trade agreement has apparently galvanized conservative lawmakers who privately questioned Mr. Bush's decisions.

The senators, many of whom have strongly backed President Bush's foreign policy stands, were unusually critical today, though they were careful not to attack the President personally.

'Callous,' Humphrey Says

"I am appalled at the lack of sensitivity by the White House towards the Lithuanian people as they desperately struggle to reassert independence," said Senator Gordon J. Humphrey, Republican of New Hampshire. "To announce an agreement liberalizing trade with the Soviets, two days after the President revealed he would assess no penalty against the Soviets for their

A Baltic breach in the Republican ranks.

bullying of Lithuania, is callous and unfeeling in the extreme."

Bob Dole, the Senate Republican leader, was not one of the nine senators who criticized the President. But in separate comments today, he suggested that he would "slow walk" the trade pact through Congress. "We shouldn't be doing the Kremlin any favors right now," he said. George J. Mitchell, the Senate Majority leader, has also indicated he would consider a slowdown in the negotiations.

The United States announced in Paris on Thursday that it had reached broad agreement with the Soviets on a pact that once approved by Congress could make it possible for the Soviet Union to win most-favored-nation tariff treatment by the United States, giving that country new trade privileges. The agreement is likely to be signed when Mr. Bush and President Mikhail S. Gorbachev of the Soviet Union hold their summit meeting here late next month.

While most of the senators were not ready to suggest that Mr. Bush call off the summit meeting, they did assert at a Capitol Hill news conference that the trade agreement should be shelved from the agenda.

'Sellout of Freedom'

"This is a sellout of freedom, and, to be quite frank, it is sickening," said Senator Alfonse M. D'Amato, Republi-

can of New York, who organized the news conference. "It is unacceptable for the U.S. to enter into a favorable trade agreement with the Soviet Union while it crushes Lithuanian freedom under a jackboot."

Senator Connie Mack, Republican of Florida, said that while he usually backed Mr. Bush, he decided to "respectfully disagree" in this case. "If my choice is between Mr. Gorbachev and his policies and the people of Lithuania and their freedoms," he said, "I'll choose freedom every time."

The other Republican senators who criticized the Administration's expected pact with the Soviet Union were Malcolm Wallop of Wyoming, Steve Symms of Idaho, James A. McClure of Idaho, Frank H. Murkowski of Alaska, Don Nickles of Oklahoma and William L. Armstrong of Colorado.

Several Democrats also criticized the Administration's policy on Lithuania today. Senator Dennis DeConcini, Democrat of Arizona, joined his Republican colleagues at the news conference, and Barbara A. Mikulski, Democrat of Maryland, also issued a statement opposing the agreement.

Avoid 'Anything Precipitous'

Roman Popadiuk, a White House spokesman, said that while "we are aware of the senators' concerns," Mr. Bush "does not want to do anything precipitous that will affect the process of change" in the Soviet Union.

Another White House official, speaking on the condition that he not be named, said of the senators' remarks: "It is damaging. But does it undercut the necessity about being prudent about what you say and what you do? The answer is no."